

ADOT seeks IGA with Navajo Nation for \$35 million project in Cameron



Navajo Division of Transportation Director listens to a presentation from David Benton, Arizona Department of Transportation Project Manager. ADOT is proposing an IGA with the Navajo Nation for a new \$35 million road project in Cameron. Under terms of the IGA, NDOT would provide maintenance for sidewalks and lighting maintenance for three pedestrian underpasses. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

FLAGSTAFF-The Navajo Division of Transportation met with officials from the Arizona Department of Transportation on Dec. 2012 to discuss construction on U.S. 89 in Cameron.

The group pored over renderings of the proposed underpass access (including lighting) and the roundabout interchange. Unfurled the length of the table was an aerial map of the project site dated 2002.

ADOT requested an intergovernmental agreement with the Navajo Nation to provide maintenance of sidewalks and underpass lighting for the project. The \$35 million project is subsidized by federal funding and ADOT's timeline is to have the project bid-ready by Feb. 2013 to meet federal funding deadlines.

Construction will be from the Junction of U.S. 89 and State Road 64 north to the Colorado River (milepost 463 to 467.1).

Dave Benton, ADOT Project Manager, said the project features two new northbound roadways from SR 64. Plans are to convert existing roadway into the southbound lane.

The corridor will also have

eight-foot sidewalks on both sides of the roadway, which would be maintained by NDOT, according to the IGA.

Construction plans include a roundabout interchange at the intersection of SR 64 and U.S. 89, multiple driveways with three underpasses, and a new bridge structure at the Little Colorado River.

Benton said, "The existing steel truss bridge will be replaced with two new separate concrete girder bridges.

"The bridges are six spans with two columns on each bound that are replacing the existing structure. The historic cable suspension bridge will remain and will continue being utilized for a gas line," he added.

ADOT will be adding or relocating the fence through a major portion of the project to the correct right-of-way location. Benton said the fence is inset toward the roadway and not placed at the correct locations along the right-of-way.

"There were some home site leases that are encroaching into the ADOT easement near the Cameron Chapter House,"

Benton said.

Because of this, development changes were made to mitigate any impacts to those leases, he said.

ADOT plans to offset the fence and move around the home site, including construction of a home retaining wall for safety. The entire corridor will have ADOT lighting, increasing the safety level tremendously.

Benton said the IGA would have NDOT provide maintenance of three pedestrian underpass sidewalks and lighting; and maintenance of sidewalks running south of the Cameron Trading Post to the SR 64 intersection. He underscored roadway lighting was the responsibility of ADOT.

NDOT Director Paulson Chaco said authorization of the IGA would require oversight approval from the Resources and Development Committee of the 22nd Navajo Nation Council and the Naa'bik'iyati' Committee.

"The concern that we have is liability. Unfortunately it's not the chapter that assumes that responsibility, it's the Navajo Nation that assumes that responsibility," Chaco said.

Benton said the project will be built in two phases: Construction of the northbound phase first, and then redevelopment of the existing roadway for the southbound lane.

The project includes demolition of the existing steel truss bridge and construction of a new southbound bridge.

"It's a fiscal year 2013 project. We hope to be bid-ready by February, meaning advertisements soon after," he said. "We're hoping to deliver the project as a whole, that's our intent on entering into an IGA with the Nation."

Steve Boschen, ADOT

Deputy State Engineer, said he would provide NDOT with load calculations for the underpass lighting for the power requirements and cost estimates.

Chuck Gillick, acting director for the ADOT Flagstaff District, said he would check with the City of Flagstaff regarding annual maintenance costs for sidewalks.

Chaco said cost estimates for the lighting and sidewalk maintenance would give NDOT a clearer picture of budget costs for the maintenance agreement that must be crafted in coordination with the IGA.

However, liability was still the main concern for NDOT.

"We've had some situations on Navajo with New Mexico, where we had to pay out on our liabilities on those roads where accidents happened," he said.

Audra Merrick of ADOT Flagstaff District Development reiterated that the highway lighting through the corridor would be the responsibility of ADOT.

Chaco said council delegate Walter Phelps (Birdsprings, Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake) has wrestled over the issue of liability with attorneys from the Navajo Nation Department of Justice for the past year.

Phelps is the sponsor for the IGA legislation.

Chaco explained that NDOT maintenance crews were currently obligated to snow removal duties across the Navajo Nation. The maintenance of sidewalks would be a tertiary consideration, he said, especially with the number of Navajo chapters requesting road maintenance activities.

Coupled with the cost of sweeping the sidewalks at least four times a year, Chaco expressed concerns with funding,

especially when tribal transportation funds have been dwindling in recent years.

ADOT remained adamant on construction of this project for 2013.

"We would love to deliver this project as the entire piece, from an economy of scale perspective and also to benefit the community," said Boschen.

He said one alternative would be to take out the sidewalks, which is undesirable because it would open up the roadway to pedestrians and potential accidents. The other alternative is to scrap the project entirely and

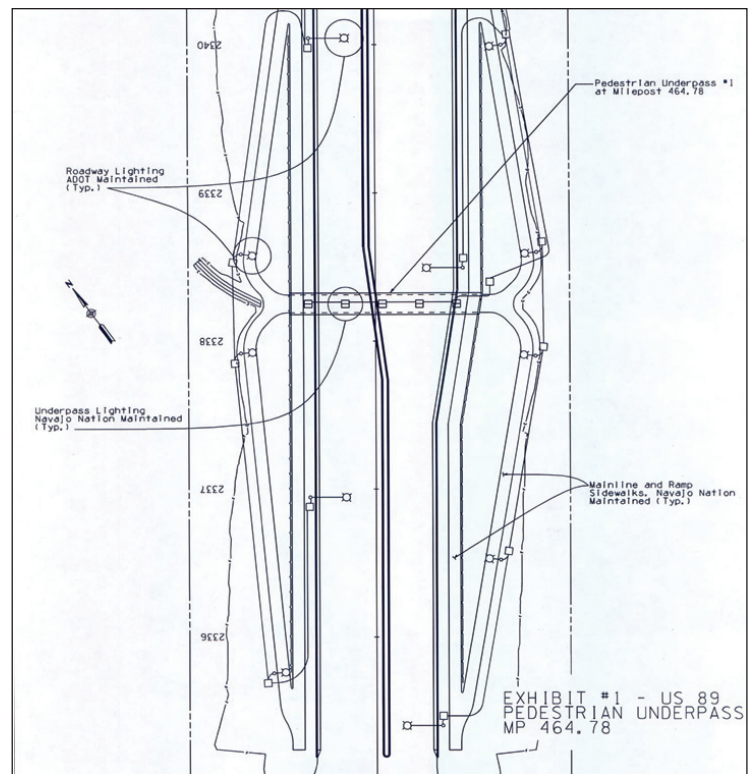
proceed with another project, in order to meet the federal obligation.

"It looks like this is a good project, very impressive for \$35 million," Chaco said.

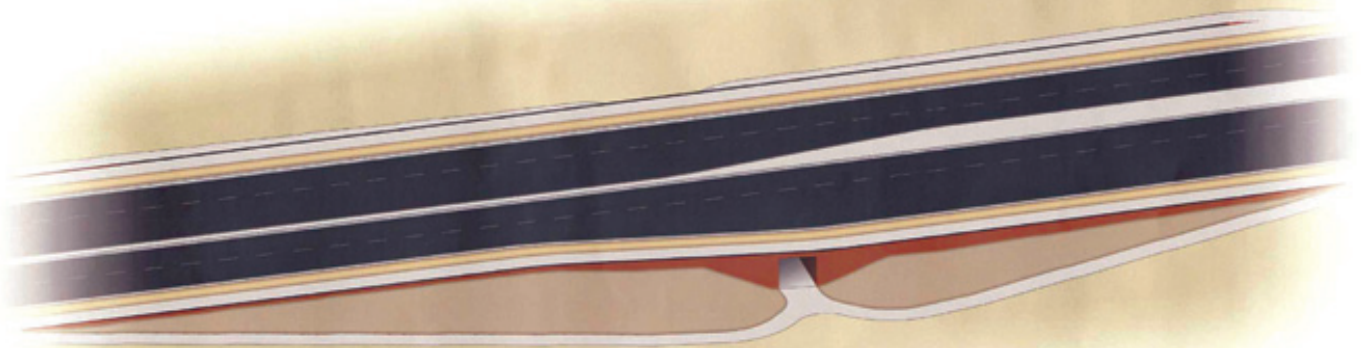
NDOT is currently moving the IGA through the SAS 164 review process before presentation to the Resources and Development and Naa'bik'iyati' Committees.

-30-

"We would love to deliver this project as the entire piece, from an economy of scale perspective and also to benefit the community."



Above, Exhibit 1 illustrates the U.S. 89 pedestrian underpass at milepost 464.78. ADOT is responsible for the roadway lighting and NDOT is responsible for underpass lighting and the mainline and ramp sidewalks. Below, the rendering of the underpass access illustrates the sidewalks on both sides of the roadway, the ramp and the sidewalk going through the underpass. (Renderings courtesy of ADOT)



RESPECTING THE NATIVE HERITAGE AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE